

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 25, 2003

Warning: Do Not Be Fooled By Sham Grassroots Opposition to AHPs

Dear Colleague:

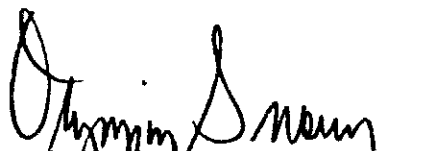

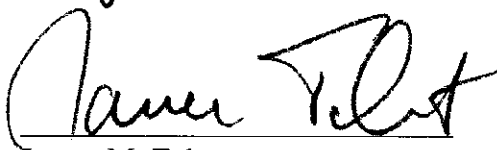
We are writing to alert you to an internet sham that is now circulating that tries to entice random people with MSN accounts to authorize a letter to be sent to their Members of Congress expressing opposition to our bill, S. 545, the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2003. The sham grassroots offer entices those who respond in a sweepstakes drawing to win a free trip to Washington, D.C., for four people, complete with air fare, hotel, and local transportation. This is a cynical use of modern technology designed to generate a false level of opposition for a bill that would help small businesses get their health insurance at more reasonable rates.

The sponsor of this sham is a coalition opposed to our bill. The leading members of this coalition have the most at stake on this issue, and the most resources to devote to the fight. The small businesses who support and would benefit from this bill do not have the money to sponsor a sweepstakes to give away a free trip to Washington for four people. ***They are trying to make ends meet and provide their employees with health-care benefits, the costs for which are skyrocketing because the large insurance companies are pumping their money into defeating this bill with gimmicks like this sweepstakes.***

Despite the heated rhetoric and predictions of dire consequences flowing from Association Health Plans (AHPs), this legislation is really about giving small businesses the same advantages that large employers and unions have long enjoyed. Currently, small businesses have no choices in the market for their health insurance. A General Accounting Office report has revealed that only a few large insurance companies control the small group market. They recognize that if national AHPs are created, they will face competition for the first time in a market they have had all to themselves for too many years. Indeed, the level of their opposition is testimony that these plans will be effective in attracting small businesses and their employees and giving them better coverage at lower rates.

Over 41 million Americans are uninsured and approximately 60 percent of these work for a small business or are dependent on one. By giving small businesses better access to more affordable health insurance, we can help reduce the ranks of these employed but uninsured. Legislation creating national AHPs passed the House on June 19 with 36 Democrats supporting it, and it is now time for the Senate to take up this measure, which will give small businesses greater opportunities for providing affordable health care. Please join us in supporting S. 545 and beware of sham grassroots opposition.

Sincerely,


Olympia J. Snowe
Christopher S. Bond
James M. Talent
1